

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

MARK DOUGLAS LOWES, *Indy Dreams and Urban Nightmares: Speed Merchants, Spectacle and the Struggle over Public Space in the World-class City*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002, xvii + 148 p.

Selling a city to prospective corporations, artistic groups, or even residents demands marketing tools that highlight the quality of a city. In an effort to promote the virtues of their respective cities, city politicians often engage in the rhetoric of the "world-class city." This entity possesses such attributes as symphonies, state-of-the-art transit systems, and school systems performing well on standardized tests. More recently, however, the cultural currency of this moniker includes professional sporting events and teams. It is from this intersection of world-class city and professional sporting events that Mark Douglas Lowes begins *Indy Dreams and Urban Nightmares*. The text offers a compelling, succinct case study of the efforts undertaken by the promoters of the Molson Indy Vancouver to move the event from False Creek to Hastings Park. Tracing the grassroots opposition to the privileging of "the consumer over the citizen in urban public life," Lowes considers the nature and implications of the ideology of the world-class city (13).

You do not need a knowledge of Vancouver's city politics, gentrification over the last century, or even its geography to enjoy this study of the politics of space. In essence, the issue underlying the text is one of who may lay claim to the public spaces of the Canadian urban landscape. Confronted with the possibility of the Molson Indy Vancouver leaving the city if an acceptable space, notably Hastings Park, was not secured in 1997, taking with it the millions of dollars in revenue, and, even more problematically, the claim of Vancouver as a world class city, politicians, lobbyists, and residents were positioned in a drama of political intrigue wherein the very nature of public space in Vancouver would be determined.

The text provides a detailed case study of how residents in and around the Hastings Park site mobilized to challenge the "promotional culture" created by such events as the Molson Indy Vancouver (116). The relocation debate served as a catalyst "for popular resistance to the market ideology of the world-class city" (13). The "park activists refused to accept the notion that it was somehow their responsibility – their civic duty—to facilitate the incorporation of a semi-permanent Indy racetrack in the restored park." In an effort to protect Hastings Park as a revitalized green space, *Indy Dreams and Urban Nightmares* details through historical context the uniqueness of

this urban green space as a site for people, particularly those from the surrounding lower-income neighbourhoods, to meet as a community. The privatization of this green space, as perceived by citizen groups, would also bring with it increased pollution, noise, and the loss of a communal site. Although Lowes devotes much of this case study to how Hastings Park, both historically and in contemporary discourses, is positioned in contrast with such venerable Vancouver-area green spaces as Stanley Park, the mobilization methods used, and the repercussions of the relocation of the Molson Indy Vancouver to Hastings Park, relatively little attention is devoted to the how the successful opposition to the relocation of the Molson Indy Vancouver would alter corporate-city relations. Since the disavowal of corporate presence in cities is not tenable, this issue, as part of the re-thinking of the world-class city ideology, could provide fertile ground for Lowes' subsequent work.

I recommend this book for upper- and graduate-level sociology, political science, and urban-studies-and-planning students. Lowes raises important questions about how we, as Canadians, are defining our public landscapes in response to the relentless corporate presence in the form of advertising and promotional events. Indeed, even the most Canadian of corporate entities, the beer company, does not escape scrutiny.

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